

Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
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INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 7676
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0852

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR PORG OAU XA UG US
SUBJECT: OAU SMMMIT- BIO DATA ON PAUL ETIANG

REF: (A) KHARTOUM 3323; (B) ALGIERS 2241 (NOTAL)

1. PAUL ETIANG (NEW OAU ASST. SEC GEN) IS VERY MUCH WORTH CULTIVATING. HE IS BY NATURE OPEN, APPROACHABLE AND INCLINED TO BE HELPFUL TO U.S. DIPLOMATS AND WILL OF COURSE BE UNDER MUCH LESS RESTRAINT IN ADDIS ABABA THAN HE WAS IN KAMPALA OR WHEN ACCOMPANYING AMIN ABROAD. STILL, CONTACT WITH HIM SHOULD BE HANDLED DISCREETLY, AS UGANDAN OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED FOR MUCH LESSER OFFENSES THAN TALKING WITH U.S. OFFICIALS.

2. DURING MY SERVICE IN KAMPALA (JULY 71 TO NOVEMBER 73) ETIANG WAS THE MOST HELPFUL OF ALL UGANDAN GOVERNMENT CONTACTS AND WHEN POSSIBLE HE WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO EASE RELATIONS AND HELP OVERCOME THE NUMEROUS CRISES INSTIGATED BY AMIN. HE BECAME A GOOD FRIEND. ETIANG IS A CAREER DIPLOMAT AND CIVIL SERVANT, RAN FOREIGN
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MINISTRY DURING MOST OF PERIOD IN QUESTION, BECOMING ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER IN 1972 WHEN AMIN ABRUPTLY PUT ENTIRE CABINET ON LEAVE AND REPLACED THEM WITH SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS OF EACH MINISTRY. HE LATER WAS ATTACHED TO AMIN'S OFFICE AS SENIOR ADVISOR ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND OTHER MATTERS, AND STILL LATER SHIFTED TO MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS.

AS A CAREER DIPLOMAT ETIANG HAD EARLIER SERVED IN MOSCOW AND LONDON. LAST SAW HIM AT OAU SUMMIT IN PORT LOUIS IN JULY 76 ON EVE OF ISRAELI RAID ON ENTEBBE. HE DELIVERED AMIN'S SPEECH AS OUTGOING OAU CHAIRMAN, WHICH HE WROTE HIMSELF. LATER HEARD HE HAD BEEN FIRED FROM CABINET AND THOUGHT THIS MIGHT PRESAGE HIS DEMISE.

3. ETIANG'S MOST REMARKABLE ATTRIBUTE HAS BEEN SURVIVABILITY, FOR HE HAS SERVED LONGER IN POSITIONS CLOSE TO AMIN THAN ANYONE ELSE I CAN RECALL, WITHOUT LOSING HIS HEAD (LITERALLY), AND THIS IS EXCEPTIONAL, PARTICULARLY FOR A CIVILIAN. (OF OTHERS WHO HAVE SERVED AMIN AS FOREIGN MINISTER, WANUME KIBEDI, HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, FLED INTO EXILE; MICHAEL ONDOGA WAS MURDERED AND HIS BODY DUMPED IN LAKE VICTORIA; ELIZABETH BAGAYA FLED FOR HER LIFE AFTER AMIN ACCUSED HER OF CARNAL INVOLVEMENT WITH A FRENCHMAN IN AN ORLY TOILET.) ETIANG SOMEHOW HAS THE KNACK FOR STAYING IN AMIN'S GOOD GRACES, EVEN WHEN HE IS BEING HELPFUL TO SUCH ENEMIES AS AMERICANS. AT ONE TIME, IN 1973, ETIANG SOUGHT MY HELP IN GETTING OUT OF THE COUNTRY AND OBTAINING A JOB ABROAD, AS HE FEARED FOR HIS LIFE, BUT HE SUBSEQUENTLY CHANGED HIS MIND AND DECIDED TO STAY IN UGANDA. ON ONE OCCASION HE WAS BADLY BEATEN BY SOME OF AMIN'S MILITARY GOONS (FROM THE FEARED STATE RESEARCH BUREAU, WHICH CARRIES OUT MOST OF THE

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OFFICIALLY-SANCTIONED KILLINGS) BUT HE SURVIVED THE EXPERIENCE, REPORTED IT TO AMIN, DEMANDED PROTECTION, AND APPARENTLY AMIN GAVE ORDERS THAT ETIANG WAS UNDER HIS PERSONAL PROTECTION AND NOT TO BE MOLESTED.

4. ETIANG MET HIS WIFE, ZARA, IN MOSCOW, WHERE SHE WAS STUDYING. SHE IS OF ZANZIBARI ORIGIN, BEAUTIFUL AND CHARMING. THEY HAVE AT LEAST THREE YOUNG CHILDREN. ETIANG IS FROM TESO DISTRICT AND IS AN ITESO, A MINORITY TRIBE WHICH HAS NEVER ENJOYED MUCH FAVOR OR POWER IN THE UGANDAN POLITICAL SCHEME. HIS ENGLISH IS VERY GOOD, AND HE HAS SPENT A GOOD DEAL OF HIS RECENT CAREER TRYING TO CLEAN UP, STRAIGHTEN OUT OR EXPLAIN AWAY AMIN'S PUBLIC USE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

5. THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS THAT ETIANG WAS IN THE PAY OF ONE OR ANOTHER FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, INCLUDING THE SOVIET. WHILE THIS WOULD BE LOGICAL, I CANNOT OFFER ANY INSIGHT ON THIS ASPECT. I HAVE WONDERED HOW LONG ETIANG WOULD SURVIVE IN AMIN'S SERVICE AND WHY HE DID NOT FLEE THE COUNTRY AS SO MANY OTHER WELL

EDUCATED UGANDANS HAVE WHILE THERE WAS STILL A CHANCE.
THE MOVE TO ADDIS MAY BE HIS SOLUTION OF STAYING IN
THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY WHILE ACQUIRING A SAFE DISTANCE
FROM AMIN. HIS LONG ASSOCIATION WITH AMIN WILL
PROBABLY DISQUALIFY HIM FOR ANY ROLE IN A POST-AMIN
RECONSTRUCTION OF UGANDA, WHICH WOULD BE REGRETTABLE,
AS HE IS A PERSON OF TALENT AND ABILITY, AND THERE
AREN'T MANY OF THOSE LEFT.
KEELEY

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